

Book Review

Why Pray?, Robert Llewelyn, DLT, London, 2019, pp.127, ISBN: 978-0-232-53378-1, £6.99.

Reviewed by the Revd Neil Broadbent of the Sozein Trust, council member and trustee of the CFPSS.

The contents of this small book are pure gold.

Denise Treissman has compiled little known pieces by a most remarkable Anglican priest. It comes with a recommendation from Rowan Williams on the front cover. The monochrome, apt illustrations by Jules Allen cheer the soul and charmingly add to the value of the book.

It is to be hoped that religious people, of any faith, know the central importance of prayer. As it is the primary means for deepening our relationship with, and awareness of, our Creator it is the *sine qua non* of spirituality. It is needed not only for every breath in this life, but for every breath in this life and the next.

Sadly, for guidance in prayer there seems to be very little in print beyond the exhortation to pray and books of prayers. This book, following the introduction to Robert Llewelyn and his philosophy of life, has four sections: what is prayer?, advice on prayer from Lady Julian of Norwich from *Revelations of Divine Love*, ways of praying and the fruits of prayer.

Fr Robert, in clear and simple words written during a lifetime of prayer, gives us help to appreciate its inner workings. On page 25 we read 'Do I desire to pray? Am I desiring God? And if the answer is yes, then you are truly at prayer. Even if all you can do is desire to pray that is enough.' A few pages later, on page 29, we read 'I think it helps if we can see prayer as an offering. If we are able to see prayer in this way, one important consequence will follow. We shall be relieved of all desire to make prayer successful, whatever that may mean.' 'If we build up the habit of praising God in the adverse circumstances of life we shall find ourselves living in the spirit of praise and thanksgiving...(pp.66-7). Prayer is an offering (the technical word is *sacrifice*) which entails much waiting and that silence, however initially scary, is a great part of going deeper into prayer. 'Prayer is holding on to God until we move into the knowledge that we are being held' (pp.49 & 100). 'It is the desire for God that matters. He works. He knows. He understands. (p.114).

The practical usefulness of a set of prayer beads or a rosary is expounded so simply as to neutralize the fears of some evangelicals and protestants: 'See the

rosary as a piano and the Hail Mary as a tune. A piano takes many tunes and you can choose your own for the rosary...' (p.92).

His story about elderly Mary (pp.104-8) delightfully portrays his skill in spiritual accompanying.

All that Robert Llewelyn shares with us is confirmed by Rowan Williams who wrote (*Being Christian* p.81, 2014) "...prayer from our point of view is about fidelity, faithfulness, sticking to it. I may not quite know what is going on; as prayer deepens in me I am less and less likely to know what is going on. I may be baffled, I may be depressed, and I may feel that absolutely nothing is happening; fine. Just stay there and if in doubt say. 'O God, make speed to save me.' Prayer is your promise and pledge to be there for God who is there for you. And that, essentially, is where prayer for the Christian begins and ends."

The Revd Dr Martin Israel once told me that had Robert Llewelyn been a Catholic priest rather than an Anglo-Catholic priest, the church would now be making him a saint.

As there are spiritual joys on almost every page, I wholeheartedly recommend you buy this pocket book.